

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 00402

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: UK, MARR, NATO, GW
SUBJECT: HARMONIZATION OF TANK PROGRAMS

REF: A. STATE 286660 (DTG 230440Z NOV 76)
B. STATE 278416 (DTG L20016Z NOV 76)
C. LONDON L83L3 (DTG 121805Z NOV 76)

IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTELS A AND B WE FOLLOWED UP OUR
MEETINGS WITH MOD OFFICIALS WITH A LETTER. WE HAVE
NOW RECEIVED FOLLOWING 6 JANUARY 77 REPLY FROM SIR
CLIFFORD CORNFORD ADDRESSED TO POL-MIL ATTACHE. WE
QUOTE TEXT IN FULL.

"I AM SORRY NOT TO HAVE REPLIED SOONER TO YOUR
LETTER OF 24TH NOVEMBER ABOUT US, GERN AND BRITISH
TANK PROGRAMMES, BUT WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING THE WAY
AHEAD IN THE LIGHT OF THE UK/FRG STUDIES OF A FUTURE
MAIN BATTLE TANK AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR RE-
QUIREMENT TO REPLACE CHIEFTAINS IN THE LATE '80'S AND
THE XM1/LEOPARD II PROGRAMMES.

"WE AND THE GERMANS HAVE RECENTLY UNDERTAKEN A
COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE FMBT STUDIES. DESPITE
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PROGRESS ON A NUMBER OF MATTERS, THIS HAS CONFIRMED
THAT THERE ARE STILL UNRESOLVED DIFFERENCES OF REQUIRE-
MENT AND TIMING BETWEEN THE GERMANS AND OURSELVES. WE
HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO AGREE ON THE CHOICE OF GUN OR
ENGINE, THE FMBT AS AT PRESENT CONCEIVED DOES NOT PRO-
VIDE SUFFICIENT IMPROVEMENT OVER THE LEOPARD II TO
SATISFY THE GERMANS, WHILE WE NEED TO REPLACE THE

CHIEFTAIN ONLY ABOUT TEN YEARS OR LESS AFTER THE
GERMANS INTRODUCE THE LEOPARD II.

"IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, MY SECRETARY OF STATE HAS
WRITTEN TO HERR LEBER TO SUGGEST THAT WE SHOULD NOW
CONSIDER WHETHER IT WOULD BE PROFITABLE FOR EITHER
PARTNER TO CONTINUE WITH THE PROJECT. THE SECRETARY
OF STATE HAS ALSO WRITTEN TO MR. RUMSFELD TO ACQUAINT
HIM WITH THE BACKGROUND. DESPITE THE SETBACK ON THE
FMBT, WE WOULD HOPE TO CONTINUE OUR CO-OPERATION WITH
BOTH THE US AND THE FRG IN TANK MATTERS, AND TO CONSIDER
WITH THEM THE SCOPE FOR A DEGREE OF HARMONISATION WITH
THE TANK FLEETS OF OUR ALLIES. WE HOPE THAT THE US
ADMINISTRATION WILL BE PREPARED TO LET US HAVE DETAILED
INFORMATION ACCORDINGLY OF WHICH WE CAN TAKE ACCOUNT
IN OUR NATIONAL STUDIES OF ALTERNATIVE REPLACEMENTS FOR
THE CHIEFTAIN. MY SECRETARY OF STATE HAS SOUGHT THE
ASSISTANCE OF HERR LEBER AND MR. RUMSFELD ACCORDINGLY.

"PENDING OUR FURTHER STUDIES, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE
TO GIVE A DEFINITE RESPONSE TO THE GENEROUS OFFER
CONTAINED IN YOUR LETTER OF 24TH NOVEMBER TO PERMIT
MANUFACTURE OF THE XM1 ENGINE UNDER LICENCE IN THIS
COUNTRY, SINCE THERE ARE NUMEROUS COMPLEX CONSIDERA-
TIONS TO BE RESOLVED -- BY NO MEANS ALL OF A MILITARY
NATURE -- AND FURTHERMORE WE HAVE TO CONSIDER REQUIRE-
MENTS FOR A TANK COMING INTO SERVICE MUCH LATER THAN
EITHER THE XM1 OR THE LEOPARD II. WE WILL, HOWEVER,
BEAR YOUR OFFER IN MIND AND TAKE ACCOUNT OF IT AS OUR
STUDIES PROGRESS.

"A FURTHER POTENTIAL AREA OF TANK FLEET HARMONISA-
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TION, ON WHICH DECISIONS HAVE STILL TO BE TAKEN, IS
THE CHOICE OF GUN FOR THE XM1. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS
THAT THE BRITISH 120MM GUN OF CURRENT DESIGN IS DOING
AS WELL AS, AND IN SOME RESPECTS BETTER THAN, THE GERMAN
GUN DURING THE CURRENT TRIALS IN THE US. THE PRODUCT
IMPROVED M13A GUN IS EXPECTED TO DO EVEN BETTER, AND
WE VERY MUCH HOPE THAT THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION WILL
SEE THE VIRTUE OF TESTING THE M13A GUN, WHEN IT IS
AVAILABLE TOWARDS THE END OF THIS YEAR, BEFORE CHOOSING
THE NEW WEAPON FOR THE XM1. SINCE THE XM1 IS TO BE
EQUIPPED WITH THE 105MM GUN IN ITS EARLY YEARS, MY
SECRETARY OF STATE HAS EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE TIME-
TABLE WILL PERMIT THE M13A BEING GIVEN A PROPER CHANCE
TO SHOW WHAT IT CAN DO."

ARMSTRONG

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Message Attributes

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